



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

**WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Name and date of Committee	<b>EXECUTIVE 13 JULY 2023</b>
Subject	<b>PLANNED EXPENDITURE OF THE HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION GRANT – HOMES FOR UKRAINE TOP UP 2023-2024</b>
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare Email: <a href="mailto:Geoff.saul@westoxon.gov.uk">Geoff.saul@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Accountable officer	Jon Dearing, Assistant Director, Resident Services Email: <a href="mailto:jon.dearing@publicagroup.uk">jon.dearing@publicagroup.uk</a>
Report author	Caroline Clissold Business Manager - Housing Email: <a href="mailto:caroline.clissold@publicagroup.uk">caroline.clissold@publicagroup.uk</a>
Summary/Purpose	To consider the planned expenditure of the Homelessness Prevention Grant – Homes for Ukraine top up 2023/2024
Annexes	Annex A – Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Local Communities (DLUHC) Allocation of Homelessness Prevention Homes for Ukraine top up Grant Letter, 12th June 2023 Annex B – Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)
Recommendation(s)	That the Executive resolves to:  a) Approve the expenditure of £220,541 detailed within section 3 of this report; b) Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Resident Services in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare and the Chief Finance Officer to make any amendments to these allocations to subject to compliance with the ring fenced grant conditions; c) Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Resident Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Chief Finance Officer to make decisions on any other uplifts or grants

	that may be given over the financial years 2023-24 to address increased demands on the Housing Service, subject to compliance with the ring fenced grant conditions.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Putting Residents First</li> <li>● A Good Quality of Life for All</li> <li>● Working Together for West Oxfordshire</li> </ul>
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	<p>Executive Member with Responsibility for Housing; Chief Executive</p> <p>Deputy Chief Executive / S151 Officer; Monitoring Officer</p> <p>Head of Legal Services</p>

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1** The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has provided an annual grant allocation to assist with the Prevention of Homelessness for several years in varying different formats and amounts. This was recently changed to a two year award for 2023 onwards.
- 1.2** DLUHC awarded West Oxfordshire District Council through the Homelessness Prevention Grant £269,927 for 2023-24 rising to £282,704 in 2024-25
- 1.3** On the 12<sup>th</sup> June 2023 DLUHC announced that a £150 million UK Homelessness Prevention Grant top up has been awarded to assist local authorities with the additional pressures faced by Homelessness services relating to the Homes for Ukraine (HfU) scheme.

## **2. MAIN POINTS**

- 2.1** West Oxfordshire DC received a letter from DLUHC on the 12th June 2023 advising that the Council had been awarded an additional £220,541 from the Homelessness Prevention top up grant
- 2.2** This grant is ring fenced for homelessness targeting those most in need and to ensure local authorities are resourced to take action to prevent homelessness and to continue to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- 2.3** The purpose of this specific top up is to assist West Oxfordshire with maximising the support available to the Ukrainian cohort living with Hosts in the district under the Homes for Ukraine scheme to find sustainable accommodation.
- 2.4** The grant can also be used to support wider homelessness pressures and other refugee groups however all funds must be spent by the end of March 2024.
- 2.5** Full details of the Grant conditions are set out in the letter from DLUHC – Annex A

## **3. PROPOSAL**

- 3.1** West Oxfordshire DC's Housing Team have seen significant homelessness pressure increases over the course of the pandemic and recent cost of living crisis with a significant increase in homelessness presentations and emergency accommodation placements.
- 3.2** The additional work generated by the Homes for Ukraine (HFU) scheme alongside other Refugee schemes such as the Afghan Resettlement Scheme has seen workloads increase even further, specifically in the management side of the staff structure and the strategic representation at the various new local and countywide meetings that have been created to discuss these issues.
- 3.3** Staffing and management structure is therefore a priority area that needs to be addressed using this grant.
- 3.4** Given the short term nature of the fund and that there is only 9 months left before this must be spent, recruiting additional staffing through usual channels is unlikely to be

successful. Usual recruitment times are also lengthy, averaging three months before new staff can be successfully recruited. It is therefore likely that we will need to use agency staff as we are unlikely to attract a high quality applicant for a 6 month contract.

- 3.5 There is sufficient knowledge and experience within the current Housing Team to regrade an existing post to take on the new management responsibilities however this post will then need to be backfilled.
- 3.6 It is therefore proposed that a new post is created for the duration of the Grant period - Resettlement and Complex Needs Manager - and shared across the Public Authorities. West Oxfordshire has the highest level of need / workload in this area so this will be shared 50/25/25
- 3.7 Although new role will need to be evaluated it is likely that this will be a Level 3 Specialist or Manager level
- 3.8 Additional resourcing will also be needed to provide direct support to the Ukrainian and other Refugee groups to assist with finding alternative sustainable accommodation.
- 3.9 The remainder of the grant will be used to provide a flexible prevention approach to avoid the need for emergency accommodation, however where homelessness cannot be prevented, the grant will be used to support the costs of providing emergency accommodation:

#### 4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 None considered as the allocation is ring fenced to specific outcomes.

#### 5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The proposals set out in the table below are aimed at addressing the expectations set out by DLUHC and available accommodation in the West Oxfordshire District. There are limited options and significant costs associated with the provision of emergency accommodation within the district, as well as a shortage of longer term accommodation.

Item	Full costs	WODC cost
Resettlement and Complex Needs Manager (subject to Job Evaluation)	Circa £45,000 (to be shared % 50/25/25)	£22,500
Additional HfU family / Prevention support staff		£70,000
Flexible Prevention Grant to include, but not limited to: Rent in Advance Deposits Tenancy Set Up / Furniture / White goods Emergency Accommodation costs		£128,041

<b>Total Costs</b>		<b>£220,541</b>
<b>Funding</b>		
UK Homelessness Prevention Grant top up		<b>£220,541</b>

**5.2** As the total expenditure planned matches the grant allocation from government, the impact on the revenue budget will therefore be cost neutral.

**5.3** The proposal is therefore aimed to ensure that resourcing and finances are available to assist with reducing the use and time spent in expensive short term, emergency accommodation benefiting both the Council and the client.

**5.4** Any staffing related costs are subject to evaluation so are approximate and will require appropriate contract variations to the Publica contract.

## **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**6.1** Spending allocations need to follow the ring fenced grant schemes.

## **7. RISK ASSESSMENT**

**7.1** There is a reputational risk to the Council if it does not use this grant funding effectively for the specific purposes set out in the DLUHC letter to Chief Executives on the 12<sup>th</sup> June 2023

**7.2** DLUHC require a full financial breakdown of how the Homelessness Prevention Grant has been spent at the end of each financial year. If it has not been spent in full, or has not complied with the conditions of the Grant, West Oxfordshire Council could be required to return all or some of it.

**7.3** There is also a risk that rising demands on the service from ongoing financial and housing challenges facing residents of the West Oxfordshire District Council area during the ongoing pandemic and Cost of Living Crisis could impact on the Council's ability to deliver a full statutory Housing service if resources are not adequate to meet demand

## **8. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

**8.1** Please see attached Equalities Impact Assessment – Annex B

## **9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

None

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

(END)